

JOINT NEWS RELEASE

New Mexico State Forestry
New Mexico State Parks
Bureau of Land Management
Bandelier National Monument
Santa Fe National Forest



For Release May 23, 2006

AGENCY CONTACTS

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| NEW MEXICO STATE FORESTRY: | DAN WARE | (505) 476-3336 |
| NEW MEXICO STATE PARKS: | ERICA ASMUS-OTERO | (505) 827-1473 |
| BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT: | HANS STUART | (505) 438-7510 |
| BANDELIER NATIONAL MONUMENT: | GARY KEMP | (505) 672-3861 |
| SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST: | CLAUDIA STANDISH | (505) 438-7805 |

State and Federal Agencies to Fly Red Flags When Weather Conditions May Support Extreme Fire Behavior

The public may be seeing red this fire season – red flags that is. The ‘red flag’ initiative is a way to forewarn fire agencies and the public to prepare for the possibility of increased wildfire occurrences, extreme burning conditions and/or exceptional fire behavior.

New Mexico State Forestry Offices, State Parks, BLM offices, the Bandelier National Monument and the Santa Fe National Forest will fly red flags at their offices whenever the National Weather Service (NWS) issues ‘Red Flag Warnings’ for areas in New Mexico.

A Red Flag Warning is issued by NWS to call attention to critical weather conditions that may result in extreme fire behavior. Typically, these conditions include a combination of:

1. Sustained wind averaging 15 mph or greater
2. Relative humidity less than or equal to 25 percent
3. Temperatures of greater than 75 degrees

Additional criteria, such as dry lightning or unstable air masses, may also be considered by the NWS.

Agencies included in the effort include the New Mexico State Forestry Division and State Parks, the Bureau of Land Management, Bandelier National Monument, and the Santa Fe National Forest. Other agencies and national forests may join in this effort in the near future.

“Red flag warnings will provide reminders that conditions are especially dangerous and that all of us must exercise extreme caution when working outdoors or visiting recreation sites,” said Arthur “Butch” Blazer, New Mexico State Forester. “We are asking the public to always observe local fire restrictions and closures. They are put into effect to protect lives and property during this year’s exceptionally dry conditions.”

-more-

“Our goal is for people to modify any activities that could contribute to the risk of starting a fire,” added Linda Rundell, New Mexico State Director for the BLM.

“The flag will forewarn the public of imminent or actual weather conditions that are favorable to wildfires, extreme burning conditions, and/or exceptional fire behavior,” said Santa Fe National Forest Supervisor, Gilbert Zepeda. “The flags are a visual reminder to be vigilant as the winds begin to blow and increase our fire danger,” added Zepeda.

As always, but especially during Red Flag Warning periods, be extremely careful with activities that involve open flames (smoking, campfires, ditch burning, etc.), generate sparks (welding, weed-whacking, chain saws, lawn mowing, etc.), or create intense heat. For example, don’t park your vehicle on dry grass – catalytic converters can start fires.

For further information on red flag warnings, visit <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/abq/>. For further information about fire conditions in New Mexico, visit <http://www.nmfireinfo.com>.

###